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CENTENNIAL ADDRESS

AT CAMBRIDGE.

By ANDREW P. PEABODY.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT CAMBRIDGE,

ON THE

Hundredth Anniversary

OF

WASHINGTON'S TAKING COMMAND OF
THE CONTINENTAL ARMY,

JULY 3, 1875.

By ANDREW P. PEABODY.

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ADDRESS.

WHEN it was proposed to give a place to this epoch in the series of centennials, my first thought was that Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill, in so recent memory, and the already glowing work of preparation for the country's hundredth birthday, would so dwarf and chill our celebration here as to make it merely a heartless municipal parade. But the occasion has grown upon me. I see and feel that it holds the foremost place in the series. It has paramount claims, not on us or our State, but on our whole people. We might rightfully have made our arrangements, not for a local, but for a national festival. We commemorate the epoch but for which Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill would have left in our history hardly a trace, probably not a single name, and the centennial of our independence would remain for a generation not yet upon the stage to celebrate.

Cambridge was the first capital of our infant republic, the cradle of our nascent liberty, the hearth of our kindling patriotism. Before the 3d of July, 1775, there were tumults, conflicts, bold plans, rash enterprises; but there was no coördinating and controlling will, purpose, or authority. On and from that day the colonies were virtually one people. Before, they had nothing in common but their grievances. They were as yet British provinces,—though wrenching the cords that held them, still undetached, and with no mode of action upon or with one another. By adopting the army and choosing its head they performed their first act, not of alliance, but of organic unity, and became a nation unawares, while they thought themselves still wronged and suppliant dependencies of the British crown. They thus decided the question between a worse than unsuccessful rebellion and revolution.

That the rebellion, as such, would have been an utter failure, is only too certain. The American party in England had on its side eloquence, indeed, and wisdom, but neither numerical force in Parliament, nor the power to

mollify ministerial obstinacy, or to penetrate with a sense of right the crass stupidity on the throne. Boston was held by disciplined, thoroughly armed and well-fed troops, under officers of approved skill and prowess, strongly entrenched and fortified at accessible points, and sustained by a formidable naval force. Hardly one in fifty of the colonial army had had any experience in war, and I doubt whether there was a single man among them, officer or private, who was a soldier by profession. They had come from the farm and the forge, with such arms and equipments as they could bring; they had no bureau of supply, no military chest, no organized commissariat, and their stock of ammunition was so slender that it was ordered by the Provincial Congress that no salute should be fired on the reception of the commander-in-chief. They were from four different provinces, under as many generals, with sectional jealousies which the common cause could hardly keep at bay; and harmonious counsels could be maintained or expected only and scarcely at moments of imminent peril. At Bunker Hill they had shown both their strength and their weakness, their unsurpassed courage and their poverty of resource. Superior in the conflict, overwhelming the enemy with the shame and disaster of a signal defeat, they had been compelled to yield the ground on which they had won imperishable glory, and to see the heights they had so bravely defended occupied by a hostile battery. They held Boston beleaguered by the prestige of that day, too feeble to press the siege, yet, as they had well proved, too strong to be dislodged and scattered, but by the disintegrating elements in their own unorganized body. These elements were already at work, and the secession of even a single regiment would have been the signal for speedy dissolution and submission to the royal government.

This precarious condition of affairs was beyond the remedial authority of the individual provinces. Massachusetts could choose a general for her own troops, but could not place the forces of New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island under his control. Still less could any efficient system of sustenance or armament have been arranged by separate legislatures. A central authority alone could carry forward the resistance so nobly begun. The Continental Congress would in vain have passed patriotic resolutions, protests against tyranny, votes of sympathy; in vain would they have aroused popular indignation and multiplied centres of resistance through the land. The one decisive act in the struggle, the seal of what had been achieved, the presage and pledge of all that should ensue in the coming years, was that the consummation of which we now celebrate.

Cambridge was for obvious geographical reasons the only place where the provincial troops could have their head-quarters,—lying near enough to the enemy to watch and check his movements, yet protected from sudden or insidious attack by the intervention of the then unbridged arm of the sea

which separates it from Boston. There was, at the same time, an intrinsic fitness that the opening scenes of the great drama should be enacted here, where so many of the leaders in counsel and arms had learned to loathe oppression and to hold the cause of liberty sacred.

From its earliest days our university had always been on the side of freedom. Its first two presidents were far in advance of their times in their views of the right of the individual man to unrestricted liberty of thought, opinion, speech and action. Increase Mather, when president, took the lead in the opposition to the tyrannical acts of Andros and Randolph, sailed for England as the unofficial agent of the aggrieved colonists, was appointed to an official agency on the news of the revolution of 1688, bore an important part in the construction of the new provincial charter and in securing its acceptance, and nominated to the royal court the governor, council and principal officers under it. His successors were of a like spirit, and there is on record no instance in which the college succumbed to usurpation, stooped to sycophancy, or maintained other than an erect position before the emissaries of the royal government. The culture of the students was in great part classical, and in the last century the classics were the text-books of all lovers of freedom. A sceptical criticism had not then cast doubt on any of the stories of ancient heroism, nor had a minute analysis laid bare the excesses and defects of the early republics, whose statesmen and warriors were deemed the peerless models of patriotic virtue, and whose orators thrilled the hearts of their New-England readers, as they had the Athenian *demos*, the senate in the capitol, or the dense masses of Roman citizens in the forum.

Almost all the Massachusetts clergy, perhaps the major part of those of New-England, had been educated here. The Tories among them were very few, and nearly the whole of their number were ardent patriots. The pulpit then sustained in affairs of public moment the part which is now borne by the daily press; its utterances during the eventful years of our life-struggle had no uncertain sound; and the champions' deeds of prowess and war-lyrics of the Hebrew Scriptures gave the frequent key-note to sermon, prayer and sacred song.

Among the pioneers and guiding spirits of the Revolution, who were graduates of the college, when I have named the Adamses, Otises, Quincys, Warrens, Pickering, Hancock, Trumbull, Ward, Cushing, Bowdoin, Phillips, I have but given you specimens of the type and temper of those who for many years had gone from Cambridge to fill the foremost places of trust and influence throughout and beyond our Commonwealth. That they carried with them hence their liberal views of government and of the rights of man, we well know in the case of those of whose lives we have the record. Thus we find John Adams, just after graduating here, more than twenty years

before the declaration of independence, writing to a friend his anticipations for America, not only of her freedom from European sway, but of her becoming the chief seat of empire for the world. Year after year, on the commencement platform in the old parish church, had successive ranks of earnest young men rehearsed to greedy ears the dream of liberty which they pledged faith and life to realize.

In the successive stages of the conflict of the colonies with the mother country, the college uniformly committed itself unequivocally on the patriotic side. When the restrictions on the colonial trade called forth warm expressions of resentment, the senior class unanimously resolved to take their degrees in what must then have been exceedingly rude apparel,—homespun and home-made cloth. When tea was proscribed by public sentiment, and some few students persisted in bringing it into commons, the faculty forbade its use, alleging that it was a source of grief and uneasiness to many of the students, and that banishing it was essential to harmony and peace within the college walls. After the day of Lexington and Concord all four of the then existing college buildings were given up for barracks, and the president's house for officers' quarters. When the commander-in-chief was expected, this house was designated for his use, with the reservation of a single room for President Langdon's own occupancy. Though the few remaining students were removed to Concord, the president, an ardent patriot, seems to have still resided here, or at least to have spent a large portion of his time near the troops; for we find frequent traces of his presence among them, and on the eve of the battle of Bunker Hill he officiated as their chaplain. In connection with the prevailing spirit of the university, it is worthy of emphatic statement that the commander-in-chief was the first person who here received the honorary degree of doctor of laws.

To Harvard graduates the country was indebted for the choice of the illustrious chieftain. The earliest mention that we can find of Washington's name in this connection is in a letter of James Warren to John Adams, bearing date the 7th of May. Adams seems at once to have regarded him as the only man fitted for this momentous service. Though the formal nomination was made by Mr. Johnson of Maryland, Mr. Adams on a previous day first designated Washington as "a gentleman whose skill and experience as an officer, whose independent fortune, great talents, and excellent universal character would command the approbation of all America, and unite the cordial exertions of all the colonies better than any other person in the Union." There were, however, objections on sectional grounds and personal ambitions that required the most delicate treatment, and it was mainly in consequence of Mr. Adams's strong will, untiring effort and skilful handling of opposing wishes and claims that the final ballot was unanimous. On the 5th of June the election was made. It was formally announced to

Washington by Hancock, the president of Congress, and was accepted on the spot.

The commander, impressed with the imminence of the crisis, denied himself the sad privilege of a farewell in person to his own household, took leave of his wife in a letter equally brave and tender, and on the 21st commenced his northward journey. Twenty miles from Philadelphia he met a courier with tidings of the battle of Bunker Hill. Eagerly inquiring as to the details of the transaction, and learning the promptness, skill and courage that had made the day forever memorable, he exclaimed, "The liberties of the country are safe!" A deputation from the Provincial Congress met him at Springfield, and volunteer cavalcades gave him honorable attendance from town to town, till, on the 2d of July, he arrived at Watertown, received and returned the congratulatory address of the Congress there assembled, and was then escorted by a company of horse and a goodly body of mounted civilians to the president's house, now known as Wadsworth House. The rapid journey on horseback from Philadelphia to Cambridge, and that in part over rough roads—an enterprise beyond the easy conception of our time—must have rendered the brief repose of that midsummer night essential to the prestige of the morrow, when on the first impressions of the hour may have been poised the destiny of the nation.

There were reasons why Washington not only might have been, but would inevitably have been ill received, had he not been made to win men's confidence and love. Several of the officers already on the ground had shown their capacity for great things, and had their respective circles of admirers, who were reluctant to see them superseded by a stranger; and had not the officers themselves manifested a magnanimity equal to their courage, the camp would have been already distracted by hostile factions. Then, too, the Virginian and New-England character, manners, style of speech, modes of living, tastes, aptitudes, had much less in common at that time of infrequent intercourse than half a century later, when, as we well know, apart from political divergence, mere social differences were sufficient to create no little mutual repugnancy. Washington was also well known to be an Episcopalian, and Episcopacy, from the first offensive on Puritan soil, was never more abhorred than now, when its Northern professors, with hardly an exception, were openly hostile to the cause of the people,—when in Cambridge almost every conspicuous dwelling from Fresh Pond to the Inman House in Cambridgeport had been the residence of a refugee royalist member of the English Church.

The morning of the third of July witnessed on the Cambridge Common, and at every point of view in and upon the few surrounding houses, such a multitude of men, women and children as had never been gathered here before, and perhaps has never since assembled till this very day. Never was

the advent or presence of mortal man a more complete and transcendent triumph. Majestic grace and sweet benignity were blended in countenance and mien. He looked at once the hero, patriot, sage. With equal dignity and modesty he received the thunders of acclamation, in which every voice bore part. His first victory, the prestige of which forsook him not for a moment during the weary years that followed, was already gained when under yon ancient elm he drew his sword as commander-in-chief. He had conquered thousands of hearts, that remained true to him to their last throb. The wife of John Adams writes of his appearance at that moment, "Those lines of Dryden instantly occurred to me,—

‘ Mark his majestic fabric! He’s a temple
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine;
His soul’s the deity that lodges there;
Nor is the pile unworthy of the God.’ ”

Never indeed can the temple have been more worthy of the tenant. He was forty-three years of age, in the prime of manly vigor and beauty, tall and commanding, symmetrical and graceful, unsurpassed as an accomplished equestrian, with the bearing and manners of a high-bred gentleman. His countenance—in later years, and in many of the portraits and engravings of him, fearfully distorted by one of the first rude essays of American manufacturing dentistry—still bore the perfect outlines which nature gave it, and betokened the solemn grandeur of soul, loftiness, gentleness, simplicity, benevolence, which dwelt within. Peale’s portrait of him, taken a year or two earlier, and engraved for the second volume of Irving’s “Life of Washington,” fully justifies the enthusiastic admiration which welcomed his appearance here, and in subsequent years made his mere presence an irresistible power.

With characteristic promptness he lingered not to satisfy the eyes that feasted on him, but immediately made his inspection of the encampments scattered in a semicircle from Winter Hill to Dorchester Neck, and reconnoitred the British troops from all available points of observation. On the British side he saw every token of military science, skilful engineering and strict discipline; within the American lines, an aggregation rather than an army,—bodies of raw, untrained militia, a sad deficiency of arms, accoutrements and even necessary clothing, rudely constructed works, extensive, too, beyond the capacity of the troops to maintain and defend them. Only among the Rhode-Island regiments, under General Greene, did he discover aught of military order, system, discipline and subordination. The greater part of the forces consisted of Massachusetts men, and these were the most destitute. The commander’s large-hearted sympathy did ample justice to their need and to their patriotism. “This unhappy and devoted province,” he writes to the president of Congress, “has been so long in a state of anarchy, and the yoke has

been laid so heavily on it, that great allowances are to be made for troops raised under such circumstances. The deficiency of numbers, discipline and stores can only lead to this conclusion, that their spirit has exceeded their strength."

How long Washington remained in the president's house cannot be ascertained,—probably but a few days. The house, considerably smaller than it now is, was insufficient for the accommodation of his military family, and arrangements were early made for his removal to the Vassall house, now Mr. Longfellow's, which had been deserted by its Tory owner, and occupied by the Marblehead troops. Here he resided till the following April.

I have described the acclamations of joy, trust and hope that hailed our chieftain's arrival. With the shouts of the multitude ascended to heaven the last breath of a Cambridge patriot. Colonel Gardner—a member of the Provincial Congress, a man universally honored and beloved, a pillar in Church and State, one of the bravest officers at Bunker Hill—received his fatal wound at the head of his regiment, rallied strength to urge them to valiant and vigorous resistance, lingered death-bound till the morning that gave the troops their leader and the country its father, and left the charge of a gallant officer's obsequies for the commander's first official duty. We have the general order bearing date July 4, for the rendering of the usual military honors at the funeral of one, who—so the document reads—"fought, bled and died in the cause of his country and mankind,"—words then first used, and which have become too trite for repetition, simply because they are in themselves, beyond comparison, comprehensive, appropriate, majestic, worthy of the great heart that sought expression in them.

Washington's life here has left few records except those which belong to the history of the war and of the country. He lived generously, though frugally,—receiving often at dinner his generals, the foremost personages in civil office and influence, delegates from the Continental Congress, and distinguished visitors to the camp. His own habits were almost abstemious; and when, according to the invariable custom of the time, a long session at table seemed inevitable, he left his guests in charge of some one of his staff more disposed than himself to convivial indulgence. During the latter portion of his sojourn here his wife relieved him in part from the cares of the hospitality which she was admirably fitted to adorn. He generally attended worship at the church of the First Parish. I well remember the site of the square pew, under the shadow of the massive pulpit, which he was said to have stately occupied; and the mention of it recalls to my recollection a couplet of a hymn written by Rev. Dr. Holmes and sung in the old church on the Fourth of July, fifty years ago, in which he describes that house of worship as the place

"Where, in our country's darkest day,
Her war-clad hero came to pray."

Once, perhaps oftener, service was performed in Christ Church, whose rector and most of his leading parishioners had become exiles on political grounds.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of these nine months in Cambridge. Washington himself was impatient of the delay. But for the prudent counsels of the generals who knew their men better than he could know them thus early, he would have made a direct assault on the British troops, and attempted to force their surrender or retreat; and it was here that he learned to wait, to curb his native impetuosity of temper, and to make discretion the trusty satellite of valor.

Meanwhile, the army was constantly increasing in numbers, and was largely recruited from the Middle and Southern States, while in New England, as the term of service for which enlistments had been made expired, the soldiers either reënlisted, or were replaced or more than replaced by men of equal zeal and courage. There were sufficiently frequent alarms and skirmishes to keep alive the practice of arms; while the long line of outposts, more or less exposed to sudden assault, demanded incessant vigilance, and formed a training school in strict discipline, prompt obedience, and those essential habits of camp-life which the citizen-soldier, however brave in battle, finds most uncongenial, harassing and burdensome.

The power of a single organizing mind was never more fully manifested than in the creation of a regular and disciplined army from the raw recruits, the materials heterogeneous to the last degree, to all appearance hopelessly incongruous, which now came under the commander's shaping hand. Confusion crystallized into order; discord resolved itself into harmony; jarring counsels were reconciled; rivalries vanished, as every man found his abilities recognized, his fitting place and due honor accorded to him, and his services utilized to their utmost capacity.

Never in the history of military achievements was there a more signal triumph than in the termination of the siege of Boston. On the morning of the 5th of March, when General Howe saw the four strong redoubts which had risen on Dorchester Heights while he slept, he exclaimed, "The rebels have done more work in one night than my whole army could have done in one month." In the evening the British were secure within their lines, and counted on the speedy dispersion of the besieging army; in the morning they saw surrender or flight as their only alternative. The siege was made complete and impregnable. But for the ships at anchor in the harbor the entire British army would have been prisoners of war.

Thus closed the first act of the great drama,—here, where we stand, initiated, matured, directed, borne on to its glorious and ever memorable issue. Ours, then, is more than a battle ground,—a soil hallowed by those wise, stern, self-denying counsels, without which feats of arms were mere child's

play, made sacred by the presence of such a constellation of patriots as can hardly ever, elsewhere upon earth, have deliberated on the destiny of a nation in its birth-throes,—Putnam, Greene, Stark, Prescott, Ward, Read, and their illustrious associates, men who staked their all in the contest, and deemed death for their country but a nobler and more enduring life.

Enough of history. Let us now gather up, as we may, some few traits of the character of him on whom our central regard is fixed in these commemorative rites.

The Washington of the popular imagination, nay, of our gravest histories, is a mythical personage, such as never lived or could have lived among men. The figure is too much like that of the perfect goddess born from the brain of Jupiter. Washington undoubtedly grew as other men grow, was not exempt from human passions and infirmities, was shaped and trained by the Providence whose chosen instrument he was. It was his glory that he yielded to the plastic hand, obeyed the heavenly vision, followed without halting the guiding spirit. The evident coldness of the Virginia delegates in Congress with regard to his appointment shows that up to that time, notwithstanding his early military experience, they had seen little in him to distinguish him from other respectable gentlemen of faultless lineage, fair estate and unblemished reputation. But from the moment when he accepted the command of the army he gave himself entirely and irrevocably to his country. Such singleness of purpose as his is the essence of genius, whose self-creating law is, "This one thing I do." From that moment no collateral interest turned him aside; no shadow of self crossed his path; no lower ambition came between him and his country's cause; he had no hope, no fear, but for the sacred trust devolved upon him. His disinterestedness gave him his clear and keen vision, his unswerving impartiality, his uncompromising rectitude, his power over other minds. The self-seeking man sees double; and we learn from the highest authority that it is only when the eye is single that "the whole body is full of light." The secret of influence, also, lies here. The man who can be supposed to have personal ends in view, even though in his own mind they are but secondary, is always liable to be judged by them, and the good that is in him gains not half the confidence it deserves. But self-abnegation, when clearly recognized, wins not only respect, but assent and deference; its opinions have the validity of absolute truth; its will, the force of impersonal law. The professed philanthropists and reformers who have swarmed in the social history of the last half-century furnish a manifold illustration of this principle. The few of them who have carried large numbers along with them and have moved the world have not been the greatest and most gifted among them, but those who have cared not, if the wheel would only turn, whether it

raised them to fame or crushed them to powder. So men believed and trusted in Washington, not merely because he was a wise and prudent man, but because they knew him to be as utterly incapable of selfish aims and motives as the Liberty whose cause he served.

I have spoken of a sort of mythical, superhuman grandeur, in which Washington has been enshrined in much of our popular speech and literature. I think that, on the other hand, there has been in some quarters a disposition to underrate him. For this there is ample reason, yet no ground. He seems the less, because he was so great. A perfect sphere looks smaller than one of the same dimensions with a diversified surface. We measure eminences by depressions, the height of mountains by the chasms that yawn beneath them. Littlenesses of character give prominence to what there is in it of greatness. The one virtue looms up with a fascinating grandeur from a life full of faults. The patriot who will not pay his debts or govern his passions often attracts more homage than if he led a sober and honest life. The single traits of erratic genius not infrequently gain in splendor from their relief against a background of weaknesses and follies.

We might enumerate in Washington various traits of mind and character, either of which in equal measure would suffice for the fame of a man who had little else that challenged approval. But what distinguishes Washington preëminently is that it is impossible to point out faults or deficiencies that marred his work, detracted from his reputation, dishonored his life. The most observed and best known man in the country for the eight years of the war and for the other eight of his presidency, even jealousy and partisan rancor could find no pretence for the impeachment of his discretion or his virtue. His biographers have seemed to revel in the narrative of some two or three occasions on which he was intensely angry, as if, like the vulnerable heel of Achilles, they were needed to show that their hero was still human.

But let it not be forgotten that this roundness of moral proportions, this utter lack of picturesque diversity in his character, must have been the outcome of strenuous self-discipline. His almost unruffled calmness and serenity were the result, not of apathy, but of self-conquest. It was the fierce warfare and decisive victory within that made him the cynosure for all eyes, and won for him the homage of all hearts that loved their country. We know but little of the details of his private life for the first forty years or more; but even the reverence of posterity has not succeeded in wholly veiling from view the undoubted fact that he was by nature vehement, impulsive, headstrong, impatient, passionate,—a man in whose blood the fiery coursers might easily have run riot, and strewed their way with havoc. By far the greater honor is due to him who so held them under bit, rein and curb that masterly self-control under intensest provocation became his fore-



most characteristic,—that disappointment, delay, defeat, even treachery, so seldom disturbed his equanimity, spread a cloud over his brow, or drew from him a resentful or bitter word.

We admire, also, in him the even poise with which he bore his high command in war and in the counsels of the nation. In mien, manner, speech, intercourse, he was never beneath, and never above his place. Dignity without haughtiness, firmness without obstinacy, condescension without stooping, gentleness without suppleness, affability without undue familiarity, were blended in him as in hardly any other historical personage. No one who could claim his ear was repelled; yet to no one did he let himself down. He sought and received advice, gave its full weight and worth to honest dissent, yet never for a moment resigned the leader's staff. The more thoroughly we study the history of the war, the more manifest is it that on this one man more than on all beside depended its successful end. Congress lacked equally power and promptness; the State legislatures were dilatory and often niggardly in provision for their troops; exposure and privation brought portions of the army to the very brink of revolt and secession; cabals were raised in behalf of generals of more brilliant parts and more boastful pretensions; success repeatedly hovered over his banner only to betray him in the issue; yet in every emergency he was none the less the tower of strength, or rather the guiding pillar of the nation by day and night, in cloud and fire. Heart and hope never once forsook him, and his elastic courage sustained failing hearts and rekindled flickering hope.

His judgment of men, his keen insight into character, has also its prominent place among the sources of his power. In Arnold, indeed, and to some degree in Gates, he was deceived; but of the many in whom he reposed confidence it is hard to add to the list of those who betrayed his trust. He recognized instantly the signal merit of Greene, and employed him constantly in the most arduous and responsible service. Putnam, and the other brave and devoted, but untrained generals whom he found here on his arrival, lost nothing in his regard by their rusticity of garb and mien, Pickering, than whom the annals of our State bear the name of no more ardent patriot or more honorable man, was successively his secretary, commissary general and quartermaster, and held in his presidency, at one time or another, the chief place in almost every department of the public service. In Hamilton's very boyhood he discovered the man, who eclipsed his own military fame by repairing the nation's shattered credit and establishing her financial safety and efficiency. He understood every man's capacity, and knew how to utilize it to the utmost. Rarest gift of all,—he knew what he could not do, and what others could do better than himself; and he in no respect appears greater than in committing to the most secure and efficient agency the several portions of his military and civil responsibility, in accept-

ing whatever service might redound to the public good, and in the unstinted recognition of such service.

Time fails me, and so it would were my minutes hours, to complete the picture. Nor is there need; for lives there an American who owns not his primacy, in war, in peace, in command, in service, in uncorrupt integrity, in generous self-devotion, in loyalty to freedom, his country and his God? Among the dead, the heroes and statesmen of all times and lands, his mighty shade rises preëminent,—his name the watchword of liberty, right and law, revered wherever freedom is sought or cherished, the tyrant's rebuke, the demagogue's shame, the patriot's synonyme for untarnished fame and unfading glory.

This season of commemoration has its voices, not only of gratitude and gladness, but equally of admonition, it may be, of reproach. Our nation owes its existence, its constitution, its early union, stability, progress and prosperity, under the Divine Providence, to the great, wise and good men who built our ship of state, and stood at its helm in the straits and among the shoals and quicksands through which it sailed into the open sea. Where are now our Washingtons, Adamses, Hamiltons, Jays, Pickerings,—the men whom a sovereign's ransom could not bribe, or a people's adulation beguile, or the lure of ambition dazzle and pervert? Nature cannot have grown niggardly of her noble births, God of his best gifts. But where are they? Unset jewels, for the most part, and incapable of finding a setting under our present political régime. Of what avail is it that we heap honors on the illustrious fathers of our republic, if we are at no pains to seek for their succession, heirs of their talents and their virtues? Yet, were Washington now living,—the very man of whose praise we are never weary,—does any one suppose it possible for him to be chosen to the chief magistracy? Would he answer the questions, make the compromises, give the pledges, without which no national convention would nominate him? Could he creep through the tortuous mole-paths, through which men now crawl into place and grovel into power? Would he mortgage, expressly or tacitly, the vast patronage of Government for the price of his election?

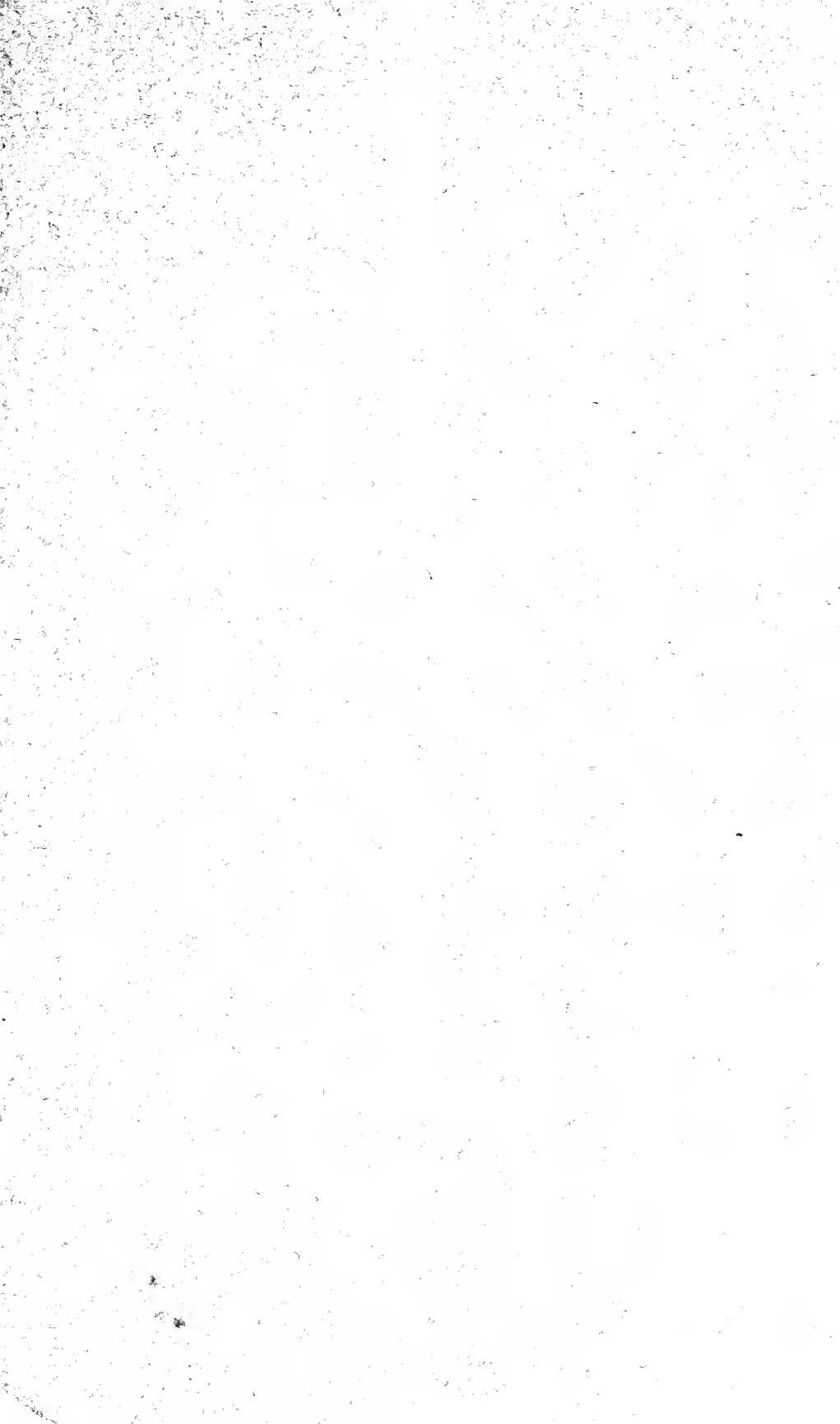
We sometimes hear the cry, "Not men, but measures." But if there be any one lesson taught us by our early history, it is that men, not measures, created, saved, exalted our nation. Corrupt men vitiate, mean men debase, dishonest men pervert, incompetent men neutralize the best measures, if such measures be even possible, except as originated, directed, actualized by the best men. Our rowers have now brought us into waters where there are no soundings. It is impossible to know, in the absence of a definite standard of value, whether our national wealth is increasing or declining,—whether we are on the ninth wave of towering prosperity, or on the verge of general bankruptcy. It is an ominous fact that an immense proportion of

individual wealth is public debt. Never was there so much need as now of the profoundest wisdom and an integrity beyond bribe, to crystallize our chaos, to disentangle the complexities of our situation, to disenthral our industries from legislation which protects by cramping and crippling, to retrench the spoils of office, enormous when not exceeding legal limits, unmeasured beyond them, and through the entire hierarchy of place and trust to establish honesty and competency, not partizan zeal and efficiency, as the essential qualifications.

There is a sad and disheartening element in the pomp and splendor, the lofty panegyric and fervent eulogy of these centennial celebrations. It was once said in keen reproach by him who spake as never man spake, "Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous." It is, in general, not the age which makes history that writes it,—not the age which builds monuments that merits them. It is in looking back to a past better than the present that men say, "There were giants in those days." Reverence and gratitude for a worthy ancestry characterize, indeed, not unworthy descendants; praise and adulation of ancestors beyond reason or measure denote a degenerate posterity. Our fathers have done little for us, if their equals do not now fill their places. Unless their lineage be undebased, their heritage is of little value.

Fellow-citizens, let us praise our fathers by becoming more worthy of them. Let this season of commemoration be a revival-season of public and civic virtue. Let the blessed memories which we rejoice to keep ever green be enwreathed afresh with high resolve and earnest endeavor to transmit the liberty so dearly purchased to centuries yet to come. When another centennial rolls round, let there be names identified with this, our country's second birth-time, that shall find fit place in the chaplet of honor which our children will weave. Some such names will be there,—Lincoln, Andrew, the heroes of our civil conflict, the men whose prudent counsels and diplomatic skill in that crisis warded off worse perils than those of armed rebellion. Let these be reinforced by yet other names that shall be written indelibly on the pillars of our reconstructed Union. Fellow-citizens, heirs of renowned fathers, look to it that in your hands their trust be fulfilled,—that the travail of their soul have the only recompense they sought.





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